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THE LOTUS MAGAZINE

SOME PICTURES WORTH A MILLION



THE million dollar picture!—That the possibility let alone the probability of such a price for a painted canvas is even being mooted, is significant of the rapid rise in value of fine paintings. Lawrence's portrait of the Countess of Wilton, reproduced in this issue of The Lotus and one of the most delightful of his many canvases, while still far from the million dollar mark in price, admirably illustrates the swift advance in cost of old masters even when they are not of very early schools. At the recent Roussel sale in Paris this canvas brought \$95,700. That is still far from a million or even half a million, at which latter sum several pictures already have been sold. The point is, however, that

only four years ago this portrait of the Countess of Wilton was sold to Mme. Roussel for \$50,000; so that during the four years which intervened between her purchase of it and its recent sale at auction, it nearly doubled in value. Had the sale been a private one, the picture might have shown an even greater advance; for private sales of paintings are apt to produce greater values than auctions, the general belief to the contrary notwithstanding.

It is obvious that if a picture practically can double its value in four years, the great paintings which have commanded half a million each, are likely to command double that amount—a million—were they ever to be offered for sale. And I am speaking wholly of private collections. For everyone knows that there are pictures in European Museums for which the great collectors readily would pay a million or even more if the pictures were for sale.

This subject of the million dollar picture recently was discussed in the Herald. One dealer stated without reservation that there were several pictures in foreign collections for each of which he would gladly pay \$1,000,000 because he was sure that he could sell them at a higher price. Another dealer mentioned specifically Watteau's "L'Embarquement pour Cythère," which is privately owned by the German Emperor, and said that although Watteau painted a variant of this picture which is in the Louvre, he would be willing to pay the German Emperor \$1,000,000 for his Watteau and be able to sell it for more, right in Paris and without the necessity of seeking a customer for it in America.

Indeed there is no necessity for discussing this matter. Prices of fine pictures are steadily advancing, and, if they continue to do so, as it seems certain they must, the arrival of the million dollar picture can be a question of only a few years. The object of this article, therefore, is not to argue the matter either pro or con, but rather to call attention to and describe some of the privately owned pictures which, in the opinion of experts, would undoubtedly command \$1,000,000 today, if they were for sale.

The Lotus selected for its illustration in its issue for January, Gainsborough's "Morning Walk" belonging to Lord Rothschild. It was reproduced by The Lotus solely for its beauty as a work of art and without any thought of its value in dollars and cents. It is rather interesting to note, however, that it was mentioned as one of the pictures worth a million. The same is true of the Frick Velasquez—formerly known as "Parma" Velasquez—and which this magazine pointed to as the clou of the remarkable exhibition of old masters described in its February issue. These paintings have been described so recently in these pages, that it is not necessary to do more than to refer to them here.

Among the other pictures mentioned, however, were two in Mr. Morgan's collection—his "Madonna of Saint Anthony of Padua" by Raphael, and the portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni by Ghirlandaio. Rembrandt was credited with three. They were "The Mill," belonging to Mr. P. A. B. Widener; "The Standard Bearer," which is the property of Baron Gustave de Rothschild; and the "Burgomaster Six," an ancestor

of the Six family, of Amsterdam, which still owns the painting. It is to these pictures and the German Emperor's Watteau, all referred to in the most offhand yet authoritative way as worth a million, that this article is devoted.

Especial interest attaches to Watteau's picture because it is, though not a replica, a variation of his "reception piece"—the diploma painting required of him by the French Academy—the version of the subject which is in the Louvre.

Staley writes in his book on Watteau that the peculiar quality of his genius was recognized by his brother-artists, so that permission was given him to choose his own diploma work for the Academy. The registers of the sitting of the Council contain the usual formula, "Il recevra de M. Van Celvem Directeur, un sujet d'ouvrage, dont il représentera une esquisse." These words, however, were scratched out, and in their place is read: "Le sujet de son ouvrage de réception a esté laissé à son volonté."

Jean Barrois and Antoine Coypel were directed to see Watteau at work. Very many studies and drawings were made by him of his theme. The first ideas appear to have come from Rubens' "Jardin d'Amour," where the wings of his love had been appropriated from one of the great allegories of Mantegna.

"L'Ile de Cythère," one of the sketches that has survived, is perhaps the most interesting of all these studies. Mr. Staley calls it a timid, formal, little piece of painting; yet with a charm about it, inasmuch as it easily reveals the framework upon which the glorious chef d'oeuvre of the "Embarque-

ment" was built. "The figures, the purpose, the accessories, are all there waiting for the breath of life to make them dance, and joke, and sing."

Watteau, however, was by no means eager to finish his task. He worked, or not, as the fit took him. He was a quivering and uncertain Gilles, and a whirling, dancing Mezzetin combined. And sometimes he sat alone, singing, at his curious diversion of playing the barrel organ, as in his portrait by himself in Lord Spencer's collection—cold, indifferent, querulous.

His friend, Comte de Caylus, blamed him greatly for indolence and uncertainty. But the delay was partly due to the frequency with which he altered the composition of his painting, even going so far as to rub it off entirely on more than one occasion. Many times the authorities at the Academy made inquiries and addressed cautions. At last Watteau received a notice that the picture must be delivered within a month. Then feverish haste followed apparent lassitude, the task duly was accomplished and the canvas was examined by the official inspectors.

As a feste galante "Le Pèlerinage à l'Ile de Cythère," its first title was inscribed in the records of the Academy, August 28th, 1717, the day of Watteau's recognition as the "Maître peintre des Fêtes Galantes."

How it gained its present designation—"L'Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythère"—it is quite impossible to discover. It made an immense sensation. Nothing more graceful or brilliant had ever been offered as a pièce de réception.

The verdict of the Academy was acclaimed by the world outside.

This chef d'oeuvre is eloquently described by Mr. Staley as no less than the creation of a new world. The tiny islet, sleeping on the enchanted waters, appears mysteriously enveloped in vanishing vapors. The foliage, realistic and luxuriant, gives shade and sun in mingled reflections. The atmosphere is a scheme of color, inspiring and scenting the whole scene. The perspective is perfect, and the distinction of light makes a veritable paradise. Cavaliers, gaily apparelled, offer their hands caressingly to their lovely partners, and assist them to embark upon the gay pilgrimage. The conceit of the jaunty little pilgrim capes, decorated with scallop-shells, and worn by the joyous company, has a piquant effect. Venus, slightly veiled, receives her guests in her gondola with a ravishing smile. Overhead the sweetest of Loves extend their wings to pilot serenely the course. Everything is full of love and beauty. The only shadows in this entrancing fairyland are light fleecy clouds and the rhythmical waving of ever-green foliage. The ripples in the lake are only sleepily disturbed by the silent splash of fountain spray.

What Mr. Staley calls a replica but really a variation of the *pièce de réception* in the Louvre was painted for de Julienne in 1717 and was engraved by Tardieu. This picture reached Berlin in 1765 rolled up and, when stretched out, was found to have sustained no damage. A record of its receipt is preserved as follows:—"Une toile de Watteau Le

Départ pour Cythère, déployée et remise en état." "It is even richer than the original in the Louvre, and is in a state of perfect preservation." In the books its title appears to be given as "L'Embarquement pour Cythère."

Mr. Morgan's famous altar-piece, the "Madonna of Saint Anthony of Padua," known also as the "Colonna Madonna" and which Raphael painted in 1505 for the nuns of Saint Anthony of Padua, at Perugia, consists of two pictures. It is fully described in the Sedelmeyer catalogue. As there stated, the principal panel represents the Holy Virgin in a red robe and a blue mantle worked with gold. She is seated on a high and richly ornamented throne. On her right knee she holds the infant Saviour. He is clothed in a white tunic edged with blue, the parti-colored scapular of St. Anthony of Padua embroidered on the shoulder, and wears a brown belt and blue cloak. The Virgin looks with an expression of tender feeling at the little Saint John, who, standing on her left side and pressing forward under the guidance of her hand, is dressed in a shirt of camel's hair and robes of green, gold and purple. He folds his hands and looks up lovingly at the divine Infant, who responds with a blessing. At the sides stand Saint Catherine in profile, her right hand on the wheel, and Saint Cecilia with a book in her hand. Both saints bear palms. Before them stand Saint Peter and Saint Paul, each holding an open book. In the background is a landscape with hills under a clear sky. The panel is a square of 5 feet 7 inches.

In the lunette, the Eternal Father is depicted as an aged man with a bald head and a forked beard, but dignified of

mien, a golden globe in His left hand, His right raised in the act of benediction. Two seraphs float in the blue ether behind him, and two winged angels, one on the left with hands clasped in prayer, one on the right with his arms across his breast, hover in the heavens at His side. The panel is semi-circular, 2 feet 6½ inches by 5 feet 7 inches.

The first writer to describe this work was the industrious Vasari in his "Lives of the Painters," Florence, 1550. "In the city of Perugia," he writes, "Raphael was commissioned to paint a picture of Our Lady, by the nuns of Saint Anthony of Padua. The Infant Christ is in the lap of the Virgin and is fully clothed, as it pleased these simple and pious ladies that he should be. On each side of Our Lady are figures of Saints, San Pietro, namely, with San Paolo, Santa Cecilia and Santa Catarina. To those two holy virgins the master has given the most graceful attitudes. He has also adorned them with the most fanciful and varied head-dresses that could be imagined—a very unusual thing at the time. In the lunette above this picture he painted a figure of the Almighty Father, which is extremely fine, and on the predella three scenes with small figures. . . . The whole work is without doubt very admirable; it is full of devout feeling and is held in the utmost veneration by the nuns for whom it was painted. It is likewise very greatly commended by all painters."

In 1677, the nuns who owned the picture asked permission to sell it "to pay their debts." The central part and the lunette were sold to Antonio Bigazzini, a nobleman of Perugia. Shortly afterwards the picture passed into the posses-

sion of the Colonna family at Rome, hence its name, the "Colonna Madonna."

Early in the last century (1802), it passed from the Colonna family to Francis II, King of Naples. It was a favorite work of his, and was hung in his bedroom in the Royal Palace. When the revolution of 1860 broke out and the King was driven from his throne, the Raphael accompanied him in his wanderings, and the King succeeded in conveying it safely with his treasures to the fortress of Gaeta. The defense of this fortress during a siege of several months was signalized by the gallantry shown by the King, and more particularly by the Queen, sister of the Empress of Austria. When Gaeta fell in 1861, and the King went into exile, he again took the picture with him, and had it safely transported to Spain. He was accompanied in his flight by his financier and factotum, formerly Spanish Minister to Naples, upon whom he had conferred the title of Duke of Ripalda. The King, when he left Madrid, confided the Raphael to the custody of the Duke, and later authorized him to sell it.

In 1867 Mr. (later Sir) Charles Robinson reported that he had been shown the famous picture at Madrid, and had received a hint that it might possibly be for sale. Sir William Boxall, the Director of the National Gallery, went to Madrid, saw the picture, stated that it was in fine condition, and was anxious to obtain it. Disraeli, then in office, was told about the picture. "Get it," he said; and when told that it would cost a very large sum, repeated, "Get the picture." The conduct of negotiations was confided to Baron Rothschild, who

commissioned his agent at Madrid to purchase the painting. In the meantime Ripalda, who was acquainted with the Empress Eugénie, had sent it to Paris. The Empress, besides being always ready to serve a friend and countryman, was desirous to secure the picture for the Louvre. One million francs was asked for it. The French press insisted that it was cheap at the money, and that, as England also wanted it, the honor of France was involved in the purchase.

This was in May, 1870. A few weeks later the honor of France was involved in a far graver matter—the Franco-German war. Of course all negotiations for the picture came to an end. The former King of Naples, when Rome was taken and proclaimed the capital of United Italy, gave up all hope of recovering his lost throne and retired into private life, taking the title of Duke of Castro, reducing his household, and so arranging his financial affairs, that he was no longer under the necessity of selling his beloved picture. As a matter of fact he retained the ownership of it until his death. He lent it to the South Kensington Museum, where it was exhibited in the Raphael Room. After the King's death, his heirs decided to dispose of it. The English government having meanwhile acquired the Raphael "Madonna del Ansidei" no longer was eager to purchase the picture and it thus found its way to Sedelmeyer, from whom it passed to Mr. Morgan.

The "Morgan Madonna" consists of seven figures, that is to say, of three more than the "Ansidei." There is no such number in any Madonna picture painted by Raphael, except the "Madonna di Foligno," which also has seven figures. But

the Colonna altar-piece, unlike any other picture by Raphael, has a second picture above—the lunette; consequently this altar-piece is the richest and the most important composition of all the various Madonna pictures of Raphael.

Passavant, an authority on Raphael, gives a detailed description and history of the picture. He says also that Raphael, when a child of eight years old, learned the art of painting from his father, Giovanni Santi, and at the age of twelve years from the celebrated painter, Perugino. He states that, before he painted the altar-piece of Saint Anthony of Padua he had already painted twenty-five other pictures, among which were important works like the "Sposalizio," the "Coronation of Nicholas the Hermit," "Christ on the Cross," the "Adoration of the Magi," the "Coronation of the Virgin" and several famous Madonna pictures.

Giovanni Tornabuoni, whose beautiful portrait by Ghirlandaio also was purchased by Mr. Morgan from the Sedelmeyer gallery, was a member of the Albizzi family at Florence, and married Lorenzo Tornabuoni in 1486. The features of the portrait are identical with those of a full-length female figure in Ghirlandaio's fresco of the "Visitation" in the choir of the Church of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence. The same features also appear on the cast of a medal, inscribed "Joanna Albiza Laurentii de Tornabonis."

The portrait is a half-length, in profile, turned to the spectator's left. The lady's light golden hair falls in waves over her cheek and ear, which it partly conceals, and is gathered up in a thick plait to the back of her head. Round her neck is a

cord, from which is suspended a jewel, set with a large ruby, and with three pendant pearls. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and hold a folded handkerchief. On one of the fingers of each hand is a ring set with a jewel. Her dress is exceedingly rich, cut square, and showing a chemisette of gathered lawn. The sleeves of the inner dress are of crimson silk, divided into lozenges, in each of which is embroidered a sprig, a white flower with two leaves. The sleeves are slashed in places, and show two large puffs in front of the shoulder and five down the arm. Part of an opening is indicated at the elbow. The outer dress is a very rich pale amber brocade of a varied pattern. The background of the picture represents a niche or recess. In one corner of the sill is a jewel set with a ruby, two pearls, and three other stones, surmounted by a dragon. In the opposite corner, and behind the figure, is a book bound in black. Above this is a tablet inscribed as follows:

Ars Vtinam Mores Animvmque Effingere Posses
Pvlchrior in Terris Nvlla Tabella Foret.

MCCCCLXXXVIII.

(Oh, that art could depict her graceful manners and her mind,
Then would there be no lovelier picture upon earth. 1488.)

In Rembrandt's "Landscape with the Windmill," more usually called "The Windmill," a windmill rises above the rounded rampart of a ruined bastion, overlooking a wide moat. Two or three huts stand beside it. The road from the mill leads to the left over the little bridge of a lock to a mooring post in the foreground. A woman with a child approaches the water; a man pushes a cart up the incline. Below, a woman

washes linen and a man is watching her. A ferryboat, its mast unshipped, is advancing from the right, rowed by a man. On the further bank are some cows among the trees and further back a house. The hour is that of twilight. The last rays of the sun light up the right hand part of the sky and surround the mill with a luminous shimmer.

The picture was painted about 1650. It was in the Orleans gallery until 1798 and was bought at the sale by W. Smith. Later it was in the Marquis of Lansdowne's collection, Bowood; and now belongs to Mr. P. A. B. Widener.

Rembrandt's "Standard Bearer with a Wide Cap," in the collection of Baron Gustave de Rothschild, Paris, probably was painted in 1635. The last figure of the date has become undecipherable, but Dr. Bode believes it to have been a "5." A copy, noted in the inventory of 1749, is still in the Cassel Gallery and was etched by Mossoloff. The original has been engraved by Louw, Clerck and Haid.

Its provenance shows it to have been in the Chevalier Verbulst's collection, Brussels, in 1779. Three years later it passed into the Le Boeuf collection, Paris. In 1801 it was an accession to the Robit collection, Paris. It then passed successively through the collections of George IV., La Fontaine, Lady Clarke, Oak Hill and Sir S. Clarke, London, 1840, into that of its present owner.

The standard bearer is shown three-quarters length, life size, standing. The figure is turned to the right, the face and eyes toward the spectator. With his left hand he shoulders the standard of a large, white flag. His right hand rests on his

hip. He wears a slashed cap with a brown feather on his curly, brown hair. His moustaches are long and martial; otherwise he is clean shaven. His tunic is yellowish brown, trimmed with braid. Over it he wears an iron gorget and a wide scarf from which a sword hangs on the right. Wide sleeves, white collar and cuffs complete the costume. A strong light from the left touches his back and face and falls full on the banner.

The portrait of Burgomaster Jan Six, painted by Rembrandt in 1654, still is in possession of the Six family in Amsterdam. Jan Six was born there in 1618, and there married Margaretha, daughter of Professor Nicolaes Tulp in 1655. He became burgomaster in 1691 and died in 1700. Strictly speaking, the portrait is simply of Jan Six, not Burgomaster Six, since he did not attain to that office until thirty-seven years later. He was a poet and art collector. Rembrandt, besides painting his portrait, etched a portrait of him and also a frontispiece for his tragedy, "Medea." He owned several pictures, besides etchings and drawings by Rembrandt.

In the portrait he is standing facing the spectator, but turned slightly to the left, his head inclined toward his right shoulder and looking somewhat meditatively — Bode says "irresolutely" — before him. As if preparatory to going out, he has placed his large, black hat on his long, auburn hair. He holds a glove in his right hand and at the same time and with this hand he pulls the other glove on his left. His doublet is light grey with yellow buttons. Over it and across his left shoulder he wears a short cloak of cinnabar red, with a

gold-edged collar and braided trimming. His white collar is plain, his cuffs are braided. The background is dark grey. The light falls from above on the left over the figure, which is life size and more than half length. This picture was exhibited in Amsterdam in 1872 and 1900.

How interesting it would be to learn the feelings of the artists mentioned in this article, were there any way of letting them know that there are experts who consider their pictures worth a million.—And Rembrandt died a bankrupt!